



# **Springerville Tour Wrap-up**

Wednesday, August 24, 2011

Remarks by Gov. Jan Brewer

This has been a great day in the White Mountains.

I came here today for two reasons.

First, I wanted to see the results of the cleanup of both the fire and the flooding -- and -- secondly, I wanted to make sure people understand that this area is open for business.

It's green ... It's beautiful.

And, earlier today -- as I cut the ribbon for the re-opening of the Big Lake General Store -- I echoed what the entire area is saying ... "Come back, we're still beautiful and the fish are biting."

But, I've come with another message:

We will stand with those people and businesses impacted by the fires and flooding.

We will not abandon them.

We will not forget them.

Just last week, I announced that the U.S. Department of Agriculture has granted my request for a disaster designation for Arizona farmers and ranchers impacted by damaging drought and wildfires this year.

This follows a disaster designation granted last month for the San Carlos Apache Reservation and contiguous counties in northeastern Arizona and extends this

federal aid to qualifying farmers and ranchers in Cochise, Santa Cruz and Pima counties.

We will also never forget the firefighters who have given the ultimate sacrifice.

Not only did Deon "Dino" Classay -- a Fort Apache hotshot crew member lose his life this year -- but six members of the Perryville inmate fire crew also lost their lives in the 1990 Dude fire. Nine other fire fighters have lost their lives since 1990. They're Arizona's special heroes, and we honor their sacrifice.

Earlier today I visited a site where inmate fire crews are cleaning a parcel of state trust land damaged by fire. I wish the U.S. Forest Service's salvage efforts could move as quickly.

This was a collaboration between the Corrections Department, State Forester Scott Hunt and the Land Commissioner Maria Baier.

I also saw another example of Arizonans helping Arizonans, where ranchers were bringing hay from other parts of the state to help those who have been impacted.

I commend the U.S. Forest Service -- specifically Regional Forester Corbin Newman -- and Forest Supervisor Chris Knopp, for the rapid removal of hazardous trees from roadways across the burn area.

I know they're working as quickly as possible to do as much work as can be done under the exclusion rules to ensure public safety.

Although the Forest Service's position is neutral on federal legislation they don't intend to wait for Congress before moving forward with post-fire planning and implementation.

Additionally, I thank Corbin and Chris for allowing representatives of Arizona's agencies to work closely with their Wallow Fire BAER Team.

Let me take a minute to emphasize the size of the Wallow fire's impact.

In the 2002 Rodeo-Chediski fire, TWENTY Mexican Spotted Owl nest sites were affected by the 468,000 acres that were burned.

In comparison, approximately FORTY-THREE Mexican Spotted Owl nesting sites were affected by the 538,000 acre Wallow fire.

That is a loss of 15 per cent of all known nest sites in just TWO fires.

The total dollars spent on fire suppression to date for this year's fires is in excess of \$185 million.

If that money had been applied to THINNING -- prior to a fire event -- between 250,000 and 300,000 acres could have been thinned.

In short, more Mexican Spotted Owl habitat has been damaged or lost due to mega wildfires than would EVER have been affected by reasonable forest management and timber harvest.

All forest and woodlands in Arizona total approximately 4 million acres.

The Rodeo and the Wallow fires have burned about 25 percent of that total.

The remaining 3 million areas are at risk of another devastating fire.

Author, scientist and forester Aldo Leopold wrote that [QUOTE] "Conservation must be a state of harmony between man and land." [END QUOTE]  
I believe Leopold meant we need a BALANCE – that we must use SOUND SCIENCE – not a hands-off approach.

So, here are some things that need to be done:

-- I want to encourage the Forest Service to open up the areas our forests they closed so that our hunters and anglers can help us manage the animal populations.

These populations are going to struggle -- given the fire's damage to their habitats.

-- I want to encourage the Forest Service to keep the 4FRI project on track, we can't afford anymore slippage in the timeline.

-- I want to encourage the Forest Service to look at every possible avenue to extend the terms of contracts beyond 10 years to encourage investment to recreate our timber industry.

-- We need to proceed with post-fire planning with a sense of urgency.

-- We need to prioritize post-fire tree removal around key public safety objectives first like existing roads, key infrastructure and areas close to communities.

-- We need to supply local industries with a substantial amount of “black” wood to complement the “green” wood they have been harvesting through restoration treatments through White Mountain Stewardship Contract.

-- We should continue to plan restoration treatments within the burn perimeter because many areas were only lightly burned or not burned at all.

-- Beyond the public safety objectives, there is a need to clearly identify our long term desired conditions for the Wallow area and let those conditions dictate forest management including salvage activities.

Some of those conditions should include future fire management, for example creating a landscape where future fires – prescribed or natural – can be managed safely.

-- Strong science must guide any and all work.

We can't have arbitrary diameter limits or caps on cutting pines. Somebody said that an 18” cap is only two inches LESS stupid than a 16” cap. And, as Leopold said we need to more closely emulate Mother Nature.

-- Collaboration must guide any and all work.

In closing, I commit to you that my administration will do everything to:

-- Create thriving, healthy forests, healthy wildlife habitat, healthy functioning streams and lakes ...

-- Create forests that can accommodate fire, whether prescribed or natural ...

And, finally, create forests that through ongoing restoration work can provide local industries with wood to sustain jobs.

Thank you for the opportunity to be with you today.